

Summer Reading Project – English 4AP

Gulliver's Travels

Satire is a mirror in which people see everyone else's face but their own. – Jonathan Swift

Satire: a form of writing in which human follies and vices are held up to ridicule, generally with the intention of reform. The satire may be gentle and humorous, sharp and pointed, or extremely bitter. It may be religious, social, political, personal, or all inclusive.

Throughout literary history, writers have used satire as a clever means of criticism.

One of the greatest satirists in English literature is Jonathan Swift, and his most well-known work is Gulliver's Travels. Jonathan Swift's avowed purpose in writing Gulliver's Travels was "to vex the world rather than divert it." Most certainly, Swift "vexed" the world as his attack on mankind became more openly and bitterly satirical with the progression of the story. Ironically, however, he managed to "divert" the world as well, a fact noted in a letter from one of his friends stating, ". . . all agree in liking it extremely [sic]. . . . From the highest to the lowest, from the Cabinet-council to the Nursery."

One reason for the widespread popularity of Gulliver's Travels was that it could be read on several different levels. Obviously, it is a satire; and while the satire was directed toward specific political, religious, and social concerns of Swift's own time, it also covers a much broader field in its attack on the universal human tendencies of self-deception, abuse of power and authority, and manipulation of others. Swift chose, as the vehicle for his satire, the imaginary voyage, a popular literary form of his day, and it is this framework that creates the other levels on which the book can be read. It is a fantastic adventure story that appeals to children. It is science fiction, the tale of a journey into unknown worlds, both geographical and technological. It is a picture of a utopian society. And finally, it is the character analysis of a man transformed by his experiences.

As you read Gulliver's Travels (all four voyages), take notes on the following:

- A. the universality of his satire as revealed in
 - 1. the human tendency of self-deception
 - 2. the abuse of power and authority
 - 3. the manipulation of others

- B. the different levels on which the story can be read
 - 1. fantastic adventure story
 - 2. science fiction

3. picture of a Utopian society
4. character analysis of Gulliver, who is transformed by his experiences

BE PREPARED TO PARTICIPATE IN A SOCRATIC SEMINAR, USING YOUR NOTES, DURING THE FIRST OR SECOND WEEK OF SCHOOL. You will be evaluated on the quality of your responses related to the universality of Swift's satire, as well as the multiple levels on which it can be read. You will receive a major grade for the seminar.

Addendum: You should already have a copy of Barron's 1100 Words You Need to Know (4th edition) by Murray Bromberg and Melvin Gordon if you were enrolled in AP English III. If you do not have this required book, it is available at Barnes and Noble, Borders, Amazon.com, Half Price Books, etc.

If you cannot acquire a book, one will be provided for you; however, you must notify us before the end of the semester.

Have a great summer! We are looking forward to seeing all of you in August.

Ms. Looney (J202)
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